

Minutes of the Seven Corners Opportunity Area C Special Working Group January 7, 2015

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM
Mason District Government Center

Attendance:

Special Working Group: George Fitchko, Bill Lecos, Karl Moritz, Catriona McCormack, Marty Machowsky, Blake Smith, Martin Faga, Margaret Van Voast, Jan Keyes, Carol Martone, and Duane Morse

Staff: Elizabeth Hagg (OCR), JoAnne Fiebe (OCR), Hyojung Garland (OCR), Barbara Byron (OCR), Bernard Suchicital (DPZ), Kim Rybold (DPZ), Marianne Gardner (DPZ), Kris Morley-Nikfar (DOT), Dan Rathbone (DOT), Leonard Wolfenstein (DOT), Tom Biesiadny (DOT) Steve Knudsen (DOT) and Aaron Frank from the Office of Supervisor Penny Gross

Review and Approval of Minutes

Marty Faga asked if there were any corrections to the Minutes of December 2, 2014. Marty moved to approve the Minutes as written, which was seconded by Blake Smith. The Minutes were approved unanimously.

Review Transportation Scenarios to be Studied

Kris Morley-Nikfar clarified that Juniper Lane is NOT being depicted with direct access to Route 7. He handed out revised maps for the draft Comprehensive Plan that reflected this. He emphasized that Juniper Lane will continue to access only the service road in front of the office building but not in front of the Sears property. He reminded the Special Working Group (SWG) that this was the transportation network that was tested in the transportation study for the area.

Catroina wondered if these changes to the maps in the draft Plan amendment mean that this is what the SWG is endorsing. Marty replied that the area still needs to be studied, but that it will function “as is” until additional study of Juniper Lane is conducted.

Marty Machowsky (M.) asked about whether taking a left turn on the service road (in front of the Sears) will no longer be possible. Kris replied that, yes, this is what was tested. Marty Faga added that it was never probably a realistic option to have an access point to Route 7 at Juniper Lane because it is too close to the Route 7 and Patrick Henry Drive intersection. Marty M. asked how the office building on the orphan parcel will be accessed. Kris replied that it will be the same as it is now.

Bill Lecos suggested closing Juniper Lane where the letter “E” falls on the map and then have a longer street on the Sears site parallel to Route 7.

Duane Morse asked how specific does the SWG need to be on the study of Juniper Lane and who will do the study? Kris replied that the Follow-On-Motions (FOMs) acted upon by the Board of Supervisors at the time of Plan adoption will direct staff to do the study, which will be done by FCDOT in coordination with VDOT. Duane asked if the FOMs should specify the various options under consideration, such as closing Juniper Lane and extending Nicholson. Also, he inquired as to what role the community will

have in this process. Dan Rathbone, FCDOT, said that working closely with the community is an inherent part of the process. Steve Knudsen, FCDOT, who conducts traffic calming studies for Fairfax County, gave an overview of the steps in the process. The process includes a petition of property owners in the primary use area of the study. He noted that VDOT will ultimately have to approve any options/measures selected. Also, the Board of Supervisors must hold a public hearing on the options/measures before they can be implemented. Marty M. said he thought this would be a divisive issue in the community.

Dan Rathbone noted that they would analyze the situation and come up with suggestions for the community's consideration. He added that there could be a phased program of treatments before and after redevelopment. Bill Lecos stressed that they are talking about closing Juniper Lane as a condition of redevelopment; they are not talking just about traffic calming measures. Duane Morse asked if the Juniper Lane study also would look at pedestrian and bicycle access. Dan Rathbone said it would.

Distribute and Discuss Summarized Community Comments from Open House

JoAnne Fiebe summarized that approximately 150 people participated in the Seven Corners Open House held on December 9, 2014. She said that Team 1's concept came out as the favorite. However, based on survey responses and conversations with participants, there was not so much a single concept that emerged but a preferences for pieces of the different concepts. She noted that there were conflicting comments as well, with some people for and some against things like closing Juniper Lane. In terms of the amenities people would like to see, the top ranked items were outdoor cafes/seating, green space and a community plaza/gathering place.

Duane Morse noted that he had totaled 211 votes on the concepts. JoAnne explained that each participant had three votes for the concepts and could cast one or all three. Bill Lecos asked about the amenities rankings. JoAnne explained the total for these was a combination of numerical rankings and "Xs" that some people used instead of numbers to mark their choices.

JoAnne presented a framework for consolidating the ideas from the three concepts into a single concept. The framework contains 5 land bays as well as denotes areas of commonality between the three concepts, including: the Spine Road connection; having a road parallel to Route 7 serving the main part of the site; not having Juniper Lane accessed by land bays to the north; and elimination of the service road in front of the Sears property.

Distribute Draft Plan Quantifications for the Three SWG Concepts and Discuss Possible Revisions

JoAnne reviewed the three team concepts and presented preliminary land use quantifications for each.

Team 1's concept, called the Aerie, has retail along a main street with a large entertainment/community use incorporating the iconic Sears building tower. There is ground floor retail with residential units above. There is also the idea of having senior housing on the site, although JoAnne said there needs to be a discussion of how many units of this type of housing should there be.

JoAnne noted that there are two options for each concept for land bay 4 in the quantification table. She said the SWG can decide to keep both options or choose one. Marty M. asked what number of units is viable for a senior housing development. JoAnne said that she would need to research this. Duane Morse asked why she was showing five stories for the senior housing. JoAnne replied that it was a compromise

between the concepts. She added that she has worked out the parking for each of the sites. Some land bays could work the parking into the grade, but that doing so adds to the cost of the development. Bill Lecos asked if retail uses could have two stories, and JoAnne replied that it was possible.

Marty M. surmised that the only piece of property that could contribute traffic to Juniper Lane would be the “orphan parcel” between Juniper Lane and Patrick Henry Drive.

Team 2’s concept, called The Hollows, has the same entrance to Leesburg Pike opposite the proposed Spine Road same as the other concepts. This concept places more retail frontage and green space to the rear of the buildings located along Leesburg Pike and has a windy road that culminates in a loop road. Townhomes are placed in the back of land bay 5 around the loop road with a green space in the middle. Retail use is proposed for land bay 1. Bill Lecos asked how land bay 1 would be parked, and JoAnne said it would be surfaced parked, and that she assumed 18 spaces based on zoning requirements. Marty M. asked if she was assuming 1 or 2 bedroom units, and JoAnne replied that they were not assuming a bedroom mix but rather an average of 1,000 SF per dwelling unit.

Team 3’s concept, called the Village at Craftsman Heights, is anchored by large green spaces on either end of the development. There is green space next to the Baileys Upper Elementary School site to serve as a shared school and community space, as well as a multi-season park on land bay 5. Concept 3 has an intermediate amount of townhomes (75,000 SF), compared with concept 1 (30,000 SF of townhouses) and concept 2 (131,000 SF of townhouses). Bill Lecos asked JoAnne about block sizes. JoAnne said she could provide this information at the next SWG meeting.

JoAnne came back to the framework plan and stated that she hoped the SWG could come to a consensus tonight on a combined or consolidated concept. Then staff would come back to their next meeting with a revised concept plan and quantifications, and also would provide trip generations comparisons for the proposed land uses.

Marty Faga commented that he thought that the retail demand for a stand-alone development on land bay 1 will be limited. Marty M. said that the quantifications for the three concepts showed a big range from a total of 532,953 SF to 690,000 SF. He said the SWG has been focused on what stuff they want rather than the numbers. He asked the SWG if there is a number they could coalesce around. Duane Morse disagreed with this approach and thought they should talk about what their collective thinking will produce. JoAnne noted that they could always reduce the density as they refine the concept by simply removing floors from the buildings. She said they can keep cutting it down to the point where they are comfortable with the numbers.

Duane said the highest percentage of open house participants stated that they want outdoor cafes/seating areas. He said he doesn’t see this activity being desirable along Route 7. Instead, he thought this activity needs to be either internally located or at the ends of the development, but should be visible from Route 7. Blake Smith noted that the Mosaic District retail is not visible from the main roads, yet it is highly successful. Duane responded that he thinks they should have retail facing on two sides of a street.

Bill Lecos said he thought senior housing makes sense on the orphan parcel with perhaps a dog park on the leftover piece. He said having open space beside the school property is appealing. Blake Smith stated that he recommended they incorporate the community park from concept 1. JoAnne mentioned she would ask the Park Authority staff to come back with some recommendations for uses of the park. Blake said he did not want to see a structured use on the site.

The SWG discussed townhouse options. Marty Faga asked what the Comprehensive Plan would say and Marty M. asked if could have townhouse and duplexes. Bernie Suchicital said that townhomes and duplexes are both classified as single-family attached housing.

Bill suggested removing the second building on land bay 4 and putting senior housing on this site and also having open space on land bay 1. Also, he suggested incorporating the entertainment use from concept 1. The SWG generally concurred with these ideas and JoAnne said that she will bring this combination together under a single concept for the group to discuss at the next meeting.

JoAnne noted that with all the park spaces being proposed that the economic feasibility of the redevelopment becomes more challenged. Bill Lecos said he still supported the idea of getting some kind of third party analysis of the feasibility of their concept. Dick Knapp, with Folger Pratt, said that the land value of the site is \$24 million. Marianne Gardner cautioned that they don't have all the financial information such as leases and cost to buy out businesses that will affect the financial feasibility of any concept.

JoAnne summarized the decisions of the SWG regarding a consolidated concept. She said they were basically adapting concept 3, which has the open spaces at either end of the site, but going with the mid-range amount of townhomes. The primary density should be located closest to Route 7 and taper in height to 3 story townhouses abutting the adjacent single-family neighborhood. Duane suggested switching the office use with the retail and residential uses so that retail uses are focused along the main corridor. The orphan parcel would be devoted to senior housing and a park space.

There was some discussion about the definition of senior housing, which is generally age-restricted to persons aged 62 years and above. Dick Knapp said that people are less interested in age-restricted housing and referenced his Park Potomac development. Marty M. said the totality of the site will have a mix of ages.

JoAnne said that at the next meeting on January 20, 2015, staff will come back with a revised single concept and updated quantification chart, as well as trip generation data for the proposed land uses. Additionally staff will have draft Comprehensive Plan language for review and discussion. She asked folks to please email her with any comments or questions in the meantime.

Presentation by FCPS Office of Facilities Planning on Student Yield Methodology

Ajay Rawat, Coordinator with Facilities Planning Services of the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) gave an overview of how FCPS calculates student-yield ratios and how they do student projections. He said they use the actual numbers of students by geocoding every student by address and housing type for each school level. Then they divide housing type by the actual number of students living in each area to determine the student-yield ratios. Ajay stated that County-wide ratio methodology is contained in the Comprehensive Plan's "Residential Development Criteria" adopted by the Board of Supervisors, after input and recommendation by the School Board. This methodology is mandated for determining the impact of additional students generated by new development. The school impact proffer contribution amount has been revised 8 times since it was first adopted in 2003, and is currently at \$11,749 per student.

Marty Faga asked if older apartments are generating more students than townhouse or single-family developments. Ajay said that older units of all types tend to be more affordable and so generate more

children. He added that based on data through-out the county it takes 10 to 15 years for new multifamily development to begin to generate higher student yields. He cited as an example the Rotunda in Tysons, which initially had more seniors and now has families with students. Blake asked if any new apartment building would generate higher student ratios, in say 40 to 50 years. Ajay said that this is the pattern.

Marty M. said he has a deep concern that the demographic make-up in the Seven Corners corridor is different, such that more multi-generational families reside in the area and in multi-family housing in particular. Ajay countered that the FCPS cannot use localized student-yield ratios. Karl Moritz asked if there was something other than housing stock accounting for student-yield ratios. Ajay indicated that there was nothing inherent to the Seven Corners area, but simply a matter of older housing stock that is more affordable that accounts for the higher student yields.

Sarah Mattingly, an audience member, stated that the formula does not seem to be working for the Mason District and asked if this had ever been evaluated by the FCPS. She asked if FCPS has taken a statistical rather than data-mining approach. Ajay gave an overview of the student enrollment methodology, which is a cohort model that is done every year. Marty M. said that the FCPS needs to be looking ahead 3 to 5 years. He said now they have overcrowding even with Bailey's Upper Elementary school being built, and there has been a request for a school site at the Willston site. He wondered how their projections have taken these things into account. Ajay explained that FCPS does projections every year for a 5 year time period by grade level and school. This information is available online, he noted. Bill Lecos asked if they could add the age of housing stock as a factor, and Ajay said they do try to account for this.

Public Testimony Period

Mark Hayes spoke about the distrust the community has had from the previous Task Force process. He expressed concern that there were only two meetings left for the SWG to complete their task. He asked that staff publish materials at least day in advance of SWG meetings so community members had more time to review. He said he agrees with Bill Lecos about tying Juniper Lane to redevelopment. He also expressed concern about the LOS at Patrick Henry and Route 7 and noted that the devil is in the details. He stated that Mason School Board representative Sandy Evans has made an effort to change the student yield formula and wondered about also looking at boundary changes.

John Ieckel, Ravenswood Park President, said there was much to like in many of these concepts, including mixed-use development, dining and space for entertainment. He said he supports the property having access off of Route 7 only. He too expressed a concern about traffic on Patrick Henry Drive. He said the neighborhood is now exploring speed control measures. He stressed the importance of being sensitive to whatever access there is to Patrick Henry from the development, and to be sensitive to the traffic volumes at the intersection of Patrick Henry and Route 7. He said he was heartened by the treatment of the orphan parcel and though the uses that had been conceived of were an improvement. He reminded the SWG to be sensitive of neighboring residents.

Clyde Miller said transportation is a big issue. He noted that they do not have the authority to decide what can happen and need to have someone from VDOT, like Paul Kraucunas, come to a SWG meeting and tell them if they are being realistic. He asked that staff bring a draft Comprehensive Plan for Opportunity Area C to the next SWG meeting. He didn't think the community wanted to have "no change" for the Sears site, so an alternative to that is to set the bar low, i.e. limit redevelopment intensity to 400,000 SF. He said there should be a maximum of seven stories along Leesburg Pike and two-stories

along the adjacent single-family neighborhood. He said to make it 50 percent residential and leave it at that. He said to keep the bar low and force the developer to request a Comprehensive Plan in the future to raise it.

Barbara Byron, OCR, stated that if they start putting in incremental levels of development then they will get a lower level of amenities. She said that the rezoning process will go through the same level of scrutiny regardless of how low or high the bar is set. Karl Moritz said they want to capture all the good ideas to guide what the community would like to see happen here. Barbara added that if they are concerned about the level of detail in the Plan, that they can define the character they are seeking in the plan language. Marty M. said they will need something specific for their next meeting. Bill Lecos said he had a concern with Clyde's approach. He said that if they were to adopt the "low-ball" and it was generally worded, they would be leaving the determination about the redevelopment to the developer.

Kris Morley-Nikfar responded that Paul Kraucunas from VDOT is a Planner not an Engineer. He said no one would be able to just look at the site and instantly tell what would work. Clyde Miller said he did not think VDOT would limit access to the site to Route 7. He said to invite someone else from VDOT if Paul was not the right man.

Debbie Ratliff supports the lowest density proposal with green space and a park next to the school. She emphasized the need to maintain the integrity of Shadeland Drive cul-de-sac. She wants language in the Plan that says to keep it closed and to maintain the integrity of the cul-de-sac.

Donald Smith would like for VDOT to specifically address Juniper Lane. He said the SWG has not put forward an option to "do nothing"; all they have are options that would result in a substantial increase in residential units. JoAnne said the "no-build option" got 14 votes at the Open House. Bill Lecos said that the problem with the NOT increasing density option is that the site then defaults to the current zoning. He felt they are better off with a different plan. He said the property owner was always free to build under the existing zoning.

Ernie Wells thinks there are some positive things being proposed. He reiterated the need for more details before the Plan moves forward in the process. He said that higher density development does have impacts on schools, and that he thought school projections underestimate student impacts. He said the formula has been shown to under-estimate the number of students. He exhorted them to not hold Bailey's Upper elementary as an exemplar. Duane Morse asked him what the SWG should do about schools in the Plan. Ernie responded that perhaps some language could be put in the Plan. Marianne Gardner directed their attention to pg. 19 in the draft Plan, where there is Plan language addressing schools.

Marty Faga asked Dick Knapp how long a rezoning for the property would take and Dick replied that it would take at least a year. Marty Faga said he has recently talked with Jim McIvanne, who is a part owner of the Sears property, and that they are expecting about 30 percent vacancy rates in the office buildings. Marty talked about the concept of functional obsolescence in which buildings are still standing but no longer operating efficiently. He said this is the beginning of a trend of decay. He said he didn't think the SWG wants to propose something that can't be done.

Adjournment

Duane Morse made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Catriona McCormack. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

The next Special Working Group meeting will be on Wednesday, January 20, 2015, at 7:00 pm at the Mason District Government Center.

Marty Faga
By: _____

01/20/2015
Date: _____